

**Amendment to the Abstract:**

*Please insert a replacement Abstract on new page 13, as shown below:*

A fluidizing mat has an upper, micro-perforated sheet and a lower gas impermeable sheet. The upper and lower sheets are maintained in spaced apart superimposed relationship by a plurality of spaced-apart load bearing means, e.g. encapsulated air bubbles, which define a plurality of passageways that extend in different directions over substantially the full area of the fluidizing mat and intersect with each other to form a single continuous chamber between the upper and lower sheets.